

Angela Answers

Dear Angela: I'm an introvert, so festival season is always exhausting for me. The hectic schedules, travel, constantly meeting new people, always needing to be "on"... any suggestions for how to get through it?

BY Angela Myles Beeching

As an introvert myself, I've had my share of festival exhaustion, too. Here's what I recommend:

1. Schedule for success.

Once you've got your basic schedule of rehearsals, performances, and coachings, organize the rest of your time. Build in undistracted time blocks for practice, meditation, and/or exercise, and set your sleep and wake times. Be as consistent as possible. This will help with jetlag and stress. Avoid the temptation of late-night partying and you'll have better tomorrows. And don't forget to get outside and breathe in the beauty. It's there for you.

2. Network with generosity.

Festivals always involve transactions with strangers: from new chamber music partners, to the staff, stage crew, board members, and post concert well-wishers. It's part of the deal.

And yes, it's a challenge for introverts. But being self-consciousness—worrying about saying or doing the wrong thing and being judged—is ultimately *self-centered*.

So stop thinking about yourself and instead crank up your curiosity. The attention we give to others is the most generous thing we can offer.

Ask the *other* person about her work, where she's from, about her history with music. Ask what she's been reading or listening to lately. What's her latest inspiration? People like being asked about themselves.

By taking your nervous attention off of yourself, you can be interested and engaged in the conversation. You'll find

yourself going down new conversational paths, gaining ideas, and even making long-term friendships.

3. Choose to respond—not react.

There's much that's outside of our control: unexpected schedule or repertoire changes and rehearsals that don't go as planned, less-than-ideal housing arrangements—and the food.

It's all too easy to react automatically and vent our frustration or anger. We make cynical comments, sulk, or even indulge in a small tantrum. We've all seen adults do this.

Some of us turn the negative inward on ourselves. We bottle up our frustrations, anger, and worries over what's gone wrong, and we let it eat away at our peace of mind and spoil the rest of our day or week.

But how we respond is a *choice*.

When we're confronted with unforeseen circumstances, the thing to do is pause and breathe. In the moment, ask yourself, "How can I respond in a way that honors both the other person and me?"

Sure, you're frustrated and disappointed, but lashing out or bottling up anger doesn't help. Acknowledge your disappointment and choose to help problem-solve. Set your intention to bring your best self forward.

Remember: Your reputation is not built on how you behave when things are going well. It's built on who you are when the going gets tough.

Yes, festival season can be a challenge because it often pushes us outside our comfort zones. But that's exactly where we find new inspiration, insights, and collaborators.

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